

Message Text

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USLO PEKING

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AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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SUBJECT: SOVIET COMMENTARIES ON U.S. BASES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

REF: MOSCOW 6800

1. SUMMARY. IN THREE RECENT COMMENTARIES, MOSCOW HAS PRAISED
PHILIPPINE AND THAI MOVES TO REVISE U.S. BASE AGREEMENTS.

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THESE MOVES ARE EXPLICITLY LINED TO THE NEW SITUATION IN THE

REGION FOLLOWING THE "PATRIOTS" VICTORIES IN INDOCHINA. ONE OF THE ITEMS WARNS THAT THE "PENTAGON" HAS NOT LEARNED THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM, AND ONE WARNS ABOUT PEKING'S SUBVERSIVE INTENTIONS IN THE AREA. END SUMMARY.

2. PRAVDA (JULY 14) CARRIES A COMMENTARY PRAISING PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT MARCOS' PLANS TO RE-NEGOTIATE THE PHILIPPINE-U.S. BASE AGREEMENTS. THE COMMENTARY DATED IN MANILA IS BY VLADIMIR OZEREV AND IS CALLED "ON A REALISTIC COURSE." THE ITEM CITES MARCOS ON THE NEED FOR PHILIPPINE "CONTROL" OVER THE BASES ON LUZON, (ON WHICH THE U.S. ALLEGEDLY ENJOYED "EXTRATERRITORIAL" RIGHTS), NOT THE LIQUIDATION OF THOSE BASES. THE "PARTIOTIC" VICTORY IN INDOCHINA, SAYS PRAVDA, CHANGED THE SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WITH THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES REEXAMING THEIR TIES WITH THE U.S. THE PRESENCE OF U.S. BASES, THE ARTICLE CLAIMS, IS AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED AND INTERFERES WITH THE NORMALIZATION OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (READ "INDOCHINA").

3. THIS COMMENTARY FOLLOWS A SIMILAR ONE IN IZVESTIYA (JULY 10) BY V. TARASOV CALLED "THE COMMANDS OF THE TIMES" WHICH IS PEGGED TO RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE U.S. PRESENCE IN THAILAND. IZVESTIYA NOTES THE KUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S CALL FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL U.S. FORCES BY MARCH 1976, AND MARCOS' POINT ABOUT CONTROL OVER BASES. THESE "POSITIVE CHANGES" ARE LINKED TO THE IMPORTANT VICTORIES IN INDOCHINA, INCLUDING SPECIFICALLY LAOS. THE IZVESTIYA PIECE THEN WARNS THAT PEKING SEEKS TO EXPAND ITS INFLUENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND WARNS THE COUNTRIES ESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH PEKING AGAINST MAOIST INTERFERENCE. NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE REQUIRES A STRUGGLE AGAINST ANY FOREIGN DEPENDENCE, IZVESTIYA CONCLUDES.

4. THE SOVIET MILITARY NEWSPAPER RED STAR (JULY 13) CARRIED A LONG COMMENTARY CALLED "BASING STRATEGY AND THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM" BY COLONEL A. LEONT'YEV. THE ARTICLE SAYS THAT THE PENTAGON HAS NOT LEARNED THE LESSON THAT THE PEOPLE OF ASIA DO NOT WANT FOREIGN MILITARY BASES, WHICH ALLEGEDLY "CONSTITUTE A THREAT TO PEACE," AND PERMIT AGGRESSION AND INTERFERENCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS BY "IMPERIALISTS." LEONT'YEV MENTIONS THE THAI AND PHILIPPINE DECISIONS AND ADDS INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MALIK'S COMMENTS ON THE NEED TO LIVE IN THE "REAL WORLD." RED STAR CITES THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT AS A "PROVOCATION" AND USES ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB'S WORDS TO ASSERT THAT U.S. VIEWS ON THE REGION HAVE NOT CHANGED. "DESPITE SOME WITHDRAWALS, THE U.S. MAINTAINS A "LINE OF DEFENSE" IN ASIA, USING 130 THOUSAND U.S. TROOPS," SAYS RED STAR.

IN ADDITION, IT SAYS, THE U.S. IS BUILDING A MAJOR BASE ON TINIAN IN THE MARIANNAS--"THE ISLAND FROM WHICH THE PLANE WHICH DROPPED THE ATOMIC BOMB ON HIROSHIMA FLEW." IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, SAYS LEONT'YEV, THE U.S. IS PLANNING TO BUILD A BASE AT DIEGO GARCIA, IN OPPOSITION TO THE WISHES OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION. PEKING DOES NOT MIND ALL THIS, SAYS LEONT'YEV, WHICH SHOWS ITS OPPOSITION TO PEACE AND INDEPENDENCE BY THE COUNTRIES IN THE AREA. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH A RINGING CALL FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL "IMPERIALIST" MILITARY BASES AND BLOCS, AND LOOKS TO COLLECTIVE SECURITY IN ASIA.

5. COMMENT: THESE COMMENTARIES DEMONSTRATE MOSCOW'S INCREASING ATTENTION TO SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND UNDERLINE THE TWIN THEMES OF ENCOURAGING FURTHER U.S. WITHDRAWAL AND WARNING AGAINST CLOSER TIES WITH PEKING. THE ATTENTION TO THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES PARTLY RESPONDS TO THEIR MOVES VIS-A-VIS THE U.S., BUT IT ALSO SHOWS KEENER SOVIET INTEREST IN BUILDING CLOSER TIES TO BOTH. WE HAVE NOT NOTED PREVIOUS SOVIET MEDIA REFERENCE TO LAOS AMONG THE COUNTRIES WHERE THE "PARTIOTS" HAVE RECENTLY EMERGED VICTORIOUS, BUT THIS IS A MINOR POINT--THE SOVIETS ARE NOW READY TO ADMIT THE OBVIOUS FACT.
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